

Prescription Drug Deal Nearing?; Congress Questions U.S. Intelligence on Iraq

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CNN: JUDY WOODRUFF'S INSIDE POLITICSWOODRUFF: A report compiled last year by the Pentagon's own intelligence agency questioned whether Iraq was producing and storing new chemical weapons. The same report, however, stated -- quote -- "Iraq probably possesses chemical weapons agents in chemical munitions, possibly including artillery rockets, artillery shells, aerial bombs and ballistic missile warheads."

And today, the agency's director, Vice Admiral Lowell Jacoby, said he had no doubt those weapons existed. The timing of the report was crucial, because it coincided with the Bush administration's efforts to mount a public case for urgently disarming Iraq.

Well, joining me now with their take on all this: Democratic Congresswoman Jan **Schakowsky**, and Republican Intelligence Committee member, Congressman Sherwood Boehlert.

Congresswoman **Schakowsky**, to you first.

If the Pentagon -- and today, you have the head of the Defense Intelligence -- or an official from the Defense Intelligence Agency -- saying, just to pull one line out of this in no way takes away our belief that Iraq had these weapons, then what's the big deal here?

REP. JAN **SCHAKOWSKY** (D), ILLINOIS: Well, part of the big deal is that no weapons have been found. And the major rationale for sending our young men and women, hundreds of thousands of them, off to war was -- were the unequivocal statements made to the Congress and the public and to the United Nations that Iraq posed an imminent threat because of its weapons of mass destruction.

And I would think that the administration would also, for its own credibility and that of the United States, would want a full investigation and get to the bottom of it.

WOODRUFF: So, Congressman Boehlert, what about the point that the administration has not yet turned up these weapons, unless you count those two mobile labs the president has

referred to?

REP. SHERWOOD BOEHLERT (R), NEW YORK: Well, Judy, I would point out that people are focusing some of the attention in the wrong direction. They're expecting to find 20-ton bombs that are visible from miles away, when, in fact, you could have a weapons of mass destruction in a vial no bigger than the top half of my pinkie.

There is no question in my mind, after many years on the Intelligence Committee, after reading all those reports over the years, that Iraq did and still does possess weapons of mass destruction. Keep in mind, chemical and biological agents are deadly.

WOODRUFF: Well, Congresswoman **Schakowsky**, he makes a very good point, doesn't he, that these weapons -- we're not talking about huge devices here. We're talking about something very, very small, in many instances.

SCHAKOWSKY: Well, if you remember what Colin Powell presented to the United Nations, he was talking about hundreds of -- thousands and thousands of tons.

At that time, we were saying that the United Nations inspectors were just playing a cat-and-mouse game with Iraq and that we, in fact, would go ahead and find them. The disturbing thing is one of three things. Either the intelligence was faulty, the interpretation was faulty, or there in fact were weapons of mass destruction and maybe they're now in the wrong hands or left unguarded.

WOODRUFF: Well, what about that, Congressman Boehlert? Which do you think it's more likely to be, that the intelligence was wrong or that these are just somewhere, but somebody else has them?

BOEHLERT: No, I think the intelligence was accurate and I think the intelligence prompted the president to make the decision he made. And I think he made the right decision for the right reasons.

But the fact of the matter is, this wasn't a surprise attack on Iraq. We were building up to war in the international community, getting the support we needed to demonstrate that there was widespread coalition concern about the activities of Iraq and willing to take action if Iraq didn't act responsibly. So they had plenty of time for movement around.

But, once again, I focus. We're looking, in most instances, for the proverbial needle in a haystack. You had 100 inspectors in a country the size of California. It's not the easiest task in the world.

WOODRUFF: So you're saying we may never find anything?

(CROSSTALK)

BOEHLERT: I'm saying that that is a very real possibility.

WOODRUFF: And if that's the case, Congresswoman **Schakowsky**, will you and other members questioning all this be satisfied?

SCHAKOWSKY: Well, first of all, there are a lot of other members on both sides of the aisle who want a full investigation.

This was war that we waged against Iraq. And it was based on the idea that these weapons of mass destruction were an imminent threat to the United States, to its neighbors, to the world. If there was another reason, then we should have debated that as a reason for going to war.

But over 100 lives have been lost of U.S. service men and women and who knows how many on the Iraqi side, based on this information that there were weapons that were ready to be used against us and the rest of the world.

WOODRUFF: And, Congressman Boehlert, very quickly, that was the rationale, was it not, that there was an imminent threat to the United States?

BOEHLERT: And I don't think there's any doubt that there was an imminent threat. And by overwhelming numbers, in both the House and Senate, on a bipartisan basis, we supported the resolution to give the president the authority to take the action he deemed necessary to protect our national security. Keep in mind, that's what the mission was, to protect our national security.

SCHAKOWSKY: If for no other reason that the veracity of the president, the intelligence community, the administration, is under question, we should, at the very least, have a full investigation.

WOODRUFF: We're going to have to leave it there.

Congresswoman **Schakowsky**...

BOEHLERT: But, Judy...

WOODRUFF: Sorry. Congressman Boehlert, very quick. We've got to run.

BOEHLERT: Judy, that's our job every single day, to investigate. We're doing that in the Intelligence Committee. And we have been for months and months.

WOODRUFF: OK, we're going to have to leave it there.

Congressman Boehlert, Congresswoman **Schakowsky**...

SCHAKOWSKY: Thank you.

WOODRUFF: ... thank you both for joining us. We do appreciate it.

INSIDE POLITICS right back after this.